

## A five-star life for kids

### Leading youngsters toward success

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Since joining Five Star, Kayzie Priebe, 14, has figured things out.

She knows what she wants to be, she knows who she wants to be with and she knows where she's going.

"It helps me know where my life will lead to," said Kayzie one February afternoon at a Five Star Event, led by cofounder Seth Maust, at Discovery Middle School in Granger, where Kayzie is an eighth-grader. "It helps me figure out what I think is good."



Five Star group leader Hilary McFarland, middle, rallies her team for the Five Star Olympics competition at Discovery Middle School in Granger.

Tribune Photos/JANAR STEWART

While they avoid calling Five Star an after-school program, in essence, it is. But instead of calling it that, Justin Maust and his brother Seth, co-founders of Five Star, hold what they call Five Star Events and surround kids with "destiny coaches," who work to instill values by example.

The Maust brothers started Five Star in 2004 in Elkhart schools, and in less than three years it's grown, holding events as well in Discovery, Grissom and Schmucker middle schools in the Penn-Harris-Madison school district.

"Five Star is about two things," said Seth, a youth pastor before helping start Five Star. "The first is to help students make a commitment to our five values. The second is to connect them with an adult who is living a five-star life."

Excellence, integrity, responsibility, service and dreams are the five values they strive to teach kids, said Seth.

Later, he adds: "We believe that by helping these students commit to live by at least one or all five values, they can change the whole trajectory of their course and turn their futures around."

Students can take part in three, eight-week sessions during the school year, says Seth, spending time on each value and how they can practice and apply it to their lives. Five Star destiny coaches spend one afternoon each week at each of the schools.

Kids spend much of their time during Five Star events being physical, playing games. They listen to music and eat food brought in by restaurants like Taco Bell and Chick-fil-A.

After they're worn out from play, they hear character-building stories about the five values, then break up into teams to discuss them with their coaches.

Coaches also get together with students outside of the school setting to share meals and play together.

Part of that play takes place at a ranch Five Star owns in Sturgis. Once every eight weeks, kids and coaches spend time fishing, horseback riding, hiking and learning teamwork on the ranch's ropes course.

On this particular afternoon at Discovery, Seth tells a story about an eagle that thinks it's a chicken because it was raised with chickens. It refused to fly because of its mind-set, until a naturalist drops it off a cliff, telling the eagle it would have to "fly or die."

The eagle eventually lifted its wings and soared, no longer under the influence of chickens.

"The wisest king that ever lived once said, 'As a man thinks, so he is,'" Seth tells the students. "You will do what you think you will do."

The students then break up into their teams with their destiny coaches and talk about what they've just heard.

To Justin, Five Star is giving kids hope by giving them dreams.

"In general, a lot of kids don't love life," says Justin, an Edward Jones investment representative before helping start Five Star. "They feel hopeless. They look at their lives and don't know how to dream."

And Justin, for one, is seemingly tired of the labels kids are given.

"I'm sick of hearing how bad kids are," he says later. "They're just badly under challenged. What we really have is an adult engagement problem."

Instead of it being kids' fault that they don't know how to live five-star lives, Justin maintains it's the adults who fail to be examples and help kids realize their potential.

He says most problems -- crime, drug use, etc. -- happens after school. And that's where Five Star comes in, trying to partner with parents and schools to change kids' mind-set.

For his part, Connor Roberts, 13, an eighth-grader at Discovery, said he and his friends who are in Five Star have learned to stay away from bad choices that include drugs.

Apart from that, he said Five Star is just fun.

"I like hanging out with my friends," Connor said. "And you can choose your team and not have one assigned to you."

Connor also said destiny coaches and Seth tell them "we're the best. He wants us to be the best we can be."

And Kayzie seems to have figured out how she can live her best life.

When she reached junior high, Kayzie said her mom asked her what she wanted to be when she grew up. At that point, she said she had no idea. Her mom told her she needed to start thinking about it.

Five Star, said Kayzie, helped her figure it out.

"I want to live in Florida, and I want to be a marine biologist," said Kayzie, adding that she and her best friend Aly Seabert, 14, are planning to build their lives around each other.

"They teach you a better way to be a good person," Kayzie said of Five Star.

For more information about Five Star, contact Justin Maust at (574) 266-4038, or [justin@fivestardestiny.com](mailto:justin@fivestardestiny.com).



Discovery Middle School sixth-graders Austin Flack, bottom, and Taylor Reynolds practice for the wheelbarrow race.